Camp David II:

The End of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict?

by Robert Satloff **(/experts/robert-satloff)**

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Robert Satloff (/experts/robert-satloff)

Robert Satloff is executive director of The Washington Institute, a post he assumed in January 1993.

Brief Analysis

There have been at least seven agreements between Israel and the Palestinians in the past seven years. Negotiations with intermittent spurts of violence have been a way of life. Any new agreement will not be about an end to the conflict: The original 1993 agreement specified such an end, with all further disputes to be settled by negotiations alone. What Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak is looking for is an agreement that will put an end to all further claims. What does that mean and how likely is he to achieve it?

Issues on the Table According to the Oslo accords, the agenda for final status talks is to include borders, security, settlements, Jerusalem, and any other issue the parties might find necessary. Oslo, for example, does not include the issue of Palestinian statehood, because Palestinians have never agreed that the establishment of their state is something for which they need Israeli agreement or acquiescence.

Both parties come with their public red lines on territory, Jerusalem, refugees and security. Some issues can be resolved more easily than others. It is not difficult, for example, for the Palestinians to accept Israel's "no foreign army" demand, especially if Israel's assumption is that the current Palestinian forces do not constitute an army. Nor is there necessarily a conflict between Barak's refusal to accept moral or legal responsibility for Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian demand for return or compensation. Palestinian Authority (PA) chairman Yasir Arafat today is a West Banker more than a "global Palestinian." He will be tough on issues of special concern to West Bankers-like land-but probably more compliant on issues that concern constituencies not so enamored of him anyway, like the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The refugee question is the issue most easily resolvable through an injection of money.

There are, however, direct contradictions between the red lines of the two sides on territory, Jerusalem, and settlements. It seems certain that Israel made an offer of 78-10-12--a full withdrawal from 78 percent of the West Bank and 100 percent of Gaza, a long-term leasehold on 10 percent of the territories (i.e., the Jordan Valley), and retention of 12 percent. This offer represents a weakening of Israel's long-held insistence on retaining the Jordan Valley, and the principal reason being cited is the peace with Jordan. In other words, if holding the Jordan Valley was to provide Israel with strategic depth to the east, then that objective is already provided for in the Jordan-Israel

peace treaty that prevents Jordan from admitting a foreign army onto its territory. There are also reports that the Palestinians have been open to the idea of reducing their demand to a minimum of 96 percent of the territory, allotting 4 percent for Israeli annexation of settlement blocs, in exchange for the equivalent or near equivalent amount of territory within pre-1967 Israel in what are known as "land swaps." This idea is highly controversial among Israelis, because it re-opens the Pandora's box of negotiating territory Israel has held since 1948.

On Jerusalem, a number of options have been mooted. They include what may be called the "vertical" option of allotting to the future Palestinian state several of the predominantly Arab neighborhoods within the post-1967 expanded municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, such as Shuafat and the Atarot airport. Another possibility, which may be called the "horizontal" option, allots Zone B-like powers and authorities to a larger sphere of Arab neighborhoods within an enlarged, yet decentralized Jerusalem municipality. The third option is a criss-cross approach that combines the vertical and horizontal options, which could include transferring authority for Muslim and perhaps Christian religious sites within the Old City to temporal or religious bodies other than the State of Israel.

Interestingly, neither side speaks any longer of red lines on statehood, although certain aspects of statehood will surely be subject to negotiation. The obvious one from Israel's point of view is that the Palestinian state will not be able to enter military alliances with any state at war with Israel. But there are many potentially destabilizing actions that can occur at lesser levels.

Possible Outcomes The summit is not likely to go into detail on all these points. Instead, there are six plausible options available to the parties at Camp David:

•Lions and lambs accord--full end of conflict and end of claims. This is very difficult to achieve, and would in any case require considerable negotiation on how to execute and implement the accord. The agreement could be reached only through unprecedented concessions from Arafat on every one of the Palestinian red lines, whereas to date, the Palestinians have made no concessions since entering this process in 1993 (they have deferred issues, but never conceded on them). This is the best option for Barak.

•Everything but Jerusalem accord. This has been Haim Ramon's favored approach. It is not known if Barak would be interested because it would leave the conflict open with few Israeli bargaining chips remaining.

•A well-packaged, new interim accord. This possibility envisions progress on some issues-certainly not all-and requires lesser Israeli concessions for lesser Israeli gains. It is an agreement that does not force any of the parties to give up so many chips that they have nothing left to bargain with next time. This is not a bad option for Arafat because it would lead to a very circumscribed Palestinian state.

•An agreement on coordinated unilateralism. This option suggests Palestinian statehood in the areas the PA already controls (zones A and B) plus the zone it would gain in a third further redeployment (FRD). This is the second best option for Barak, but it is problematic for Arafat.

•Breakdown and uncoordinated unilateralism. This option could lead to confrontation and violence, the end of which would never be clear, and is not good for either party.

•Rolling summit-adjourn and reconvene in several weeks time. This would open the leaders to intense domestic pressure and probably force them to backtrack. This is a bad idea.

What to Look For The key to closing at Camp David is getting Arafat to accept a generous and reasonable Israeli offer. Accomplishing this will require the wielding of sticks and carrots, a tactic U.S. president Bill Clinton has not employed before. The first step is to sweeten the offer, largely through U.S. assistance, which will require bringing Congress on board. Palestinians have spoken of $40 billion going just to them; others have mentioned figures as high as $100 billion, stretched over twenty years, given in aid to everyone involved (Israel, the PA, Jordan, etc.); this figure

is similar to what has been spent in the last twenty years since the Camp David Accords. The second key factor will be sketching such a nightmarish alternative future that Arafat is left no logical option other than saying yes to an agreement. The greatest obstacle is the complete lack of chemistry between Arafat and Barak: if they are forced together too much, there is no deal. This agreement is really Clinton's to make. Except for the domestic political cost involved in pressing Israel too much (the Gore-Hillary factor), Clinton faces no downside in trying but failing. But there is a real upside in succeeding, perhaps the best thing this negotiation has going for it.

When all is said and done, we are witnessing the end of the Madrid-Oslo era and the birth of the Palestinian state. This is all part of the evolving set of Arab-Israeli relationships—not a black and white world of peace or conflict, but a continuum, wherein some of Israel's relations with its Arab neighbors remain conflictual, others competitive, and still others cooperative. As for the Palestinians, the relationship will probably always have elements of all three.

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